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SUBJECT: SWEDISH SOLDIERS CRITICALLY INJURED IN AFGHANISTAN

¶1. On November 11, five Swedish soldiers on patrol west of Mazar-e-Sharif were injured by an IED roadside bomb; their local interpreter died. Two of the soldiers suffered life-threatening injuries. The attack is the most serious for Swedish troops since November 2005, when two lieutenants were killed by a roadside bomb. FM Bildt, whose visit to Kabul coincided with the attack, said the Swedish troops were working as part of a wider operation involving Afghan forces, and the attack was not directed at Swedish forces.

¶2. Comment: The opposition Social Democratic Party supports continued operations in Afghanistan through 2010. However, the new attack has caused the Social Democrats to request that the 2011 Swedish Afghan strategy include scenarios both for a responsible withdrawal and a continued presence. Each causality that Sweden incurs increases the chance that Sweden will seriously consider a responsible withdrawal if the Swedish Democratic Party retakes the government in 2010.
BARZUN